



AETC News Clips

Air Force Times



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January 13, 2006

Student pilot dies from crash injuries

Times staff

An Air Force officer died Jan. 10 from injuries sustained Sept. 21 in a plane crash south of Stinson Field, Texas, military officials said.

Second Lt. Taryn Robinson was assigned to the Air Intelligence Agency's 346th Test Squadron at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. At the time of the crash, she was in the Introductory Flight Training Program through a civilian flying school.

Robinson fought blood infections and underwent multiple skin grafts, an NBC affiliate in Colorado Springs, Colo., reported. She would have turned 23 in February, the TV station said.

Robinson's flight instructor was flying the Diamond single-engine plane when it snagged a power cable, the TV station said. He died instantly.

Air Force Time.com
Daily News roundup
17 Jan 06



AETC News Clips

Randolph AFB, Texas



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Atascosa plane crash claims second life

Web Posted: 01/14/2006 12:00 AM CST

San Antonio Express-News

A memorial service was held Friday at Brooke Army Medical Hospital for Taryn Robinson, 22, who died there Tuesday from injuries suffered in the Sept. 21 plane crash in Atascosa County.

Flying instructor James L. Weaver, 64, died at the scene of the crash that occurred when the single engine plane based at Stinson Municipal Airport clipped a power line outside Pleasanton.

Air Force spokesman Dave Smith said Robinson, a native of North Carolina, was a second lieutenant stationed at Lackland AFB who was training to be a pilot.

San Antonio Express News

PAGE: Internet

POSTED: 17 Jan 06



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Randolph AFB, Texas



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Editorial: MLK legacy deserves better than bickering

Web Posted: 01/14/2006 12:00 AM CST

San Antonio Express-News

On Monday, the nation will honor the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr., a stalwart visionary whose philosophy of nonviolence revolutionized the struggle for civil rights — for *human* rights in this country.

Sadly, controversy is marring what should be a day dedicated to remembering the lessons of a principled giant who made his mark on the world before the age of 40.

A 15-second flyover by jets from the 99th Flying Training Squadron at Randolph AFB is scheduled to punctuate the end of Monday's 20th anniversary march at Pittman-Sullivan Park.

Some are threatening to boycott the march, calling the military display antithetical to King's teachings. Others plan to attend with bandanas over their mouths and black and yellow armbands in protest.

King was a beacon of nonviolent action. His opposition to the Vietnam War, clear in his speeches, stemmed from a clear-eyed vision of the war's effect on both the Vietnamese and on America's youth there and at home.

"For the sake of those boys, for the sake of this government, for the sake of hundreds of thousands trembling under our violence, I cannot be silent," he told a crowd at New York City's Riverside Church in 1967.

He maintained his stance on the war in the face of criticism that he couldn't be a civil rights leader and advocate for peace.

Organizers say the flyover, far from dishonoring his memory, is a fitting tribute to a man who opposed war, but not the military.

"This is the way the military shows honor," District 2 City Councilwoman Sheila McNeil told the Express-News.

Flyovers are impressive spectacles and certainly appropriate in many cases.

But this is not one of them, even if the 99th Squadron is the original squadron of the Tuskegee Airmen, America's first African American pilots.

That some planners are so intent on pushing the flyover through is indicative of the egos involved in the planning of the march.

That others are planning a boycott is equally selfish.

San Antonio Express News

PAGE: Internet

POSTED: 17 Jan 06



AETC News Clips

Randolph AFB, Texas



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We urge those who are thinking about skipping the event to reconsider. King's legacy deserves better than abdication. In life, he put a moral imperative — "to save the soul of America" — ahead of his own wants. In honor of that life, Monday's marchers can and should do the same.

San Antonio Express News
PAGE: Internet
POSTED: 17 Jan 06



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Randolph AFB, Texas



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Marching with a message

Web Posted: 01/17/2006 12:00 AM CST

Lisa Marie Gómez and Laura Jesse
Express-News Staff Writers

It was over and done with in five seconds.

As two white T-1A Jayhawk jet trainers from the 99th Flying Training Squadron streaked over Pittman-Sullivan Park on Monday where Martin Luther King Day marchers had convened, critics of the flyover pointed their fingers skyward and shouted, "Shame, shame, shame, shame."

The 99th Squadron is the original squadron of the Tuskegee Airmen, the first U.S. military air unit of African American pilots. It is believed to be the first time a military flyover had taken place at an MLK march anywhere.

Despite the drizzle and light rain, police estimated some 100,000 people attended the San Antonio march, annually considered to be one of the largest in the country.

In the weeks that preceded the march, activists were angered by the MLK Commission's decision to invite a military flyover to honor King.

A few, including City Council member Patti Radle, considered boycotting the event but, in the end, decided to show up.

"I felt it was very important to be here and say what I want to say," Radle said, while holding a poster that read: "Keep King's Message Clear: Love, Understanding, Non-Violence."

People took to the streets with banners and signs that read, "MLK Lived for Peace. Military Lives for War," and chanted phrases like, "Shame, shame on you, MLK Commission."

Cordell Jones and his wife and two children have joined the march since his eldest child was born nine years ago.

"Personally, that's not what this is about," Jones said, referring to the flyover. "My hope is for my children to grow up appreciating people for their differences. I hope they don't see racial lines."

Jane Tuck, a member of a peace group, stood along Martin Luther King Drive and carried a sign that read: "MLK Was Against Militarism."

Some people raised their hands flashing a peace sign, while others shot the finger at them.

And some just walked up to the protesters and gave them a piece of their mind.

"The police don't lay down their guns. The firefighters don't lay down their hoses. So why do you want the military to lay down their arms?" Eloise Forge asked Tuck as she walked along Martin Luther King Drive. "You should be going against the government, not the military."

San Antonio Express News

PAGE: Internet

POSTED: 17 Jan 06



AETC News Clips

Randolph AFB, Texas



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Tucker smiled and responded, "We are."

"I have not had the privilege of being anywhere that had it going on like you have it going on in San Antonio," said the Rev. James E. Meeks, an Illinois state senator and executive vice president of the National Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, who gave the keynote address.

Meeks said April 3, 1968 — the day of King's last public speech — is one of the most memorable days in history. It was then that an ailing King said he was not afraid of dying because he knew African Americans would make it to the Promised Land.

"Are we there yet?" Meeks asked. "We've got some problems in America."

Meeks said there is still much work to do to create a level racial playing field in schools, business, politics and society. He pointed to low high school graduation rates among minorities, the disproportionate number of minorities in prison and the small amount of the country's wealth that blacks own.

"Black people only own 2 percent of the nation's wealth," he said.

"African Americans are in a deep hole in America," Meeks said. "If we start focusing on white America as the opposition, we'll never make it."

He told the audience to reclaim the America that King longed and dreamed for.

"Stand up, be strong and happy birthday, Dr. King," Meeks said. "America is watching San Antonio, Texas."



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Focus: Martin Luther King Jr. march

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San Antonio Express-News

A rewarding experience

Today, San Antonians and their neighbors will take to the streets of the East Side. The Martin Luther King march not only represents the civil rights movement, but brings the nation together to reflect on the cause.

Communities will unite, and city officials and leaders will descend onto Martin Luther King Drive. Here in San Antonio, where drive-by shootings and killings are far too common on this side of town, courage and bravery will not surrender to fear and violence.

For anyone who has never attended the Martin Luther King march, I encourage you to do so. I've had the privilege and honor to be a part of this event for several years, and from the moment you arrive, a sense of peace, justice and equality consumes you. The speeches, music and marching next to a stranger who truly believes in the cause is inspirational and rewarding.

Ruben Maldonado,

Natalia

Absolute belief in peace

Councilwoman Patti Radle hit the nail on the head in her letter "Jets betray King's ideal" (Wednesday) on the planned military flyover during the Martin Luther King Jr. march.

Certainly no disrespect is intended to those who serve with integrity to protect our homeland. However, if you were to hear or read the words of King when he spoke about the Vietnam War on April 4, 1967, it is clear he absolutely believed in the power of peaceful resistance and not in violence or the military solution.

Larry Meads

Military is key to rights

Councilperson Patti Radle owes an apology to every military man and woman who had the misfortune of reading her Wednesday letter.

The single most important factor in the civil rights struggle in this country has been our military. Our nation's forefathers needed military force to gain our independence to enjoy the freedoms we so cherish.

President Lincoln could not have emancipated slaves without military force. The military was the first major public institution to be desegregated, giving unparalleled opportunities to all who joined. President

San Antonio Express News

PAGE: Internet

POSTED: 17 Jan 06



AETC News Clips

Randolph AFB, Texas



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Eisenhower called up the National Guard to enforce civil rights, as did other presidents. And, yes, Ms. Radle, this was indeed accomplished “to the beat of a military drum.”

As we celebrate Martin Luther King's legacy, let this flyover remind everyone that military force was essential in establishing, preserving and protecting the civil rights of all Americans. Without it, there would be no parade.

Mike Gallagher

A note to the offended

I kept waiting for someone with just a little knowledge to point out a couple facts to the hyper-offended and annoyingly vocal members of the Martin Luther King Commission before they made complete fools of themselves. But, hey, hope springs eternal.

You might point out the following to Councilwoman Patti Radle, columnist Kathy Clay-Little and the rest of the perpetually offended:

The 99th Flying Training Squadron does not fly fighter jets. What they will see in the flyover is the T-1 Jayhawk — a trainer.

The 99th Flying Training Squadron is the progeny of the 99th Pursuit Squadron, the first all-black fighter squadron, affectionately known as the Tuskegee Airmen.

More information is on the Web site www.randolph.af.mil/12ftw/12og/99fts/index.htm.Ö

It really steams me when the agenda of a few overrides the good that many have done and the proud history of those noble few gets lost in the constant blather of today's “offended” class.

Retired Col. James Feighny



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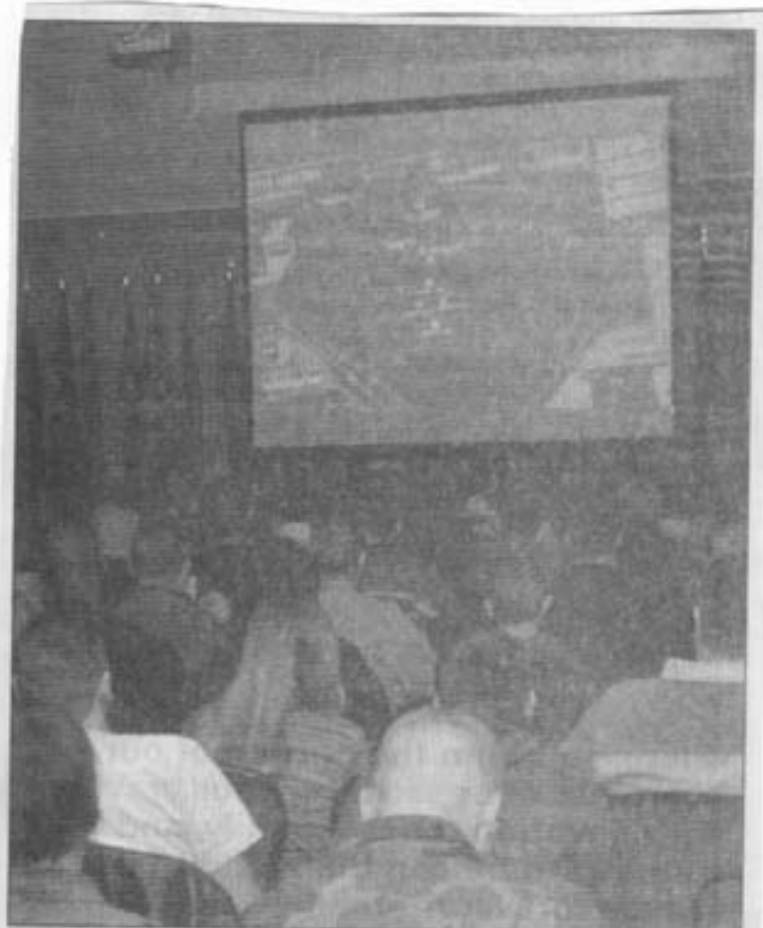
Columbus AFB, Miss.



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CAFB personnel get early look at

'Battlestar Galactica' episode



Senior Airman John Pania/U.S. Air Force

More than 300 "Battlestar Galactica" fans invaded the Columbus Club on Columbus Air Force Base for the Hollywood-style premiere of the first episode of the year for the SciFi show Thursday night.

The Commercial Dispatch

PAGE: 9A

ISSUE DATE: 9 Jan 06



AETC News Clips

Columbus AFB, Miss.



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By Tobias Brown
tbrown@cdispach.com

As technology rapidly advances, the gap between science fiction and reality is closing.

That's why more than 300 airmen, civilian employees and their families gathered at the Columbus Club on Columbus Air Force Base Thursday night to watch the newest episode of the SciFi network drama "Battlestar Galactica."

The series, which focuses on a colony of humans battling cyborg aliens for survival as they fly around a distant galaxy searching for a new planet to settle, continues its second season on SciFi in a resurrected, revamped version of the original 1970s television series.

Fans of the show identify with the high-flying planes, stories of war and quest for survival played out by the show's characters.

"What was sci-fi to me as a kid is reality now," said Don Keltner, whose wife is a civilian base employee.

"I'm a big fan of science fiction, the fast planes, the battle against the Cylons; it's all pret-

ty cool," said Rich Eckhart, a CAFB civilian employee.

The Thursday premiere was the first time the new episode was shown publicly in America. The episode aired nationwide on SciFi Friday night.

Military families have a close relationship with the show's premise.

"It relates to the military, because it's based on a Navy concept with structure and squadrons," said Col. Stephen Wilson, 14th Flying Training Wing commander at CAFB. "I'm not surprised to see so many people out here on a school night to watch the premiere. These characters' world is destroyed and there is all kinds of tension as they try to survive in an action-packed world."

According to Eckhart, premiering the show at CAFB only made sense.

"It's about aviation, military,

space and camaraderie, and it works well in this venue," he said.

Some viewers said they identify with the new SciFi show a lot more than they did with the old version of the show which aired on ABC nearly 30 years ago.

"This is a new time and a new era," said Eckhart. "They

took a male lead character and replaced him with a female. In this day in age we have women leading in the military. It's more realis-

tic and progressive, a human drama."

Michael Pilon, NBC Universal manager of affiliate promotion, was on hand for the Hollywood-style premiere.

"This is the first time we have done a showing like this at a military base," said Pilon. "I think this a great opportunity to show our support to these men and women, and the show is a perfect match with its flight and space ties."

Pilon believes people living with today's various international conflicts can learn a lesson from the show.

"I think 'Battlestar' shows us that there are two different sides to every conflict or war," explained Pilon. "Being able to watch and see a conflict on the show and see multiple perspectives can help us open our own minds and at least realize the different perspectives involved in war."

"The fantasy of a better life down the road attracts people to the show," said Keltner. "There's violence, war, striving to make a better life. It's fascinating, and the human interest relates to the world we live in."

David Lusby, general manager of Cable One, organized the premiere as a way to say thanks to CAFB for its role in the community.

"This is just our way to say thanks to all the people involved with the base and those who serve our country," said Lusby. "'Battlestar Galactica' fits in with the Air Force."

"Battlestar Galactica" airs Friday nights at 9 p.m. on SciFi.

*"What was sci-fi to me
as a kid is reality
now."*

Don Keltner
*Husband of CAFB
civilian base employee*



AETC News Clips

Sheppard AFB, Texas



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Tuskegee original

Retired captain speaks at Sheppard's MLK lunch

By Michael Hines/Times Record News
January 14, 2006, Page 1B

Claude Platte had some scary moments flying more than 3,000 feet above the ground. But standing just three feet from an audience was nearly as frightening.

The retired captain, one of the original Tuskegee Airmen, was guest speaker at this year's annual Martin Luther King celebratory lunch at Sheppard Air Force Base's Enlisted Club. The former flight instructor detailed some of his time as an instructor and learning to fly. While the experiences were hair-raising at times, talking about the experiences was a little disconcerting as well, he said.

"Really, I'm nervous," he said. "When I was an instructor, I felt like I was in authority. Coming before a group like this, I'm kind of reluctant."

He needn't consider how important his teachings have been, Lt. Col. John McDevitt Jr. told the crowd of about 200.

"He built the foundation," McDevitt said. "He broke down the barriers both in his actions and words."

Born in Fort Worth, Platte learned early on that a color line divided America. One day, he decided to sneak across. He'd known to always stick to facilities marked "colored." But then he saw a young white boy sip from a fountain with that distinction, and the boy's father scold him.

"At that point, I wondered, 'What's the difference in the water?' " he said. "So I snuck over and took a drink. Then I knew there was no difference."

Another moment in his young life would also make an impact.

"I was 9-year-old, and a plane flew low over my house," he said. "I decided, 'Geez, since I was segregated, how do people live over there?' "

That idea sparked his interest in learning to fly, but making that dream reality hit some early bumps. In 1937, the Army Air Corps and War Department began thinking of training civilian pilots in preparation for the outbreak of war. Platte had problems just passing the physical but was helped by the white physician who told him to return for the physical the next morning. When Platte did, he passed.

"He explained that really what happened is that, in the morning, I was taller than I am in the afternoon" because people get shorter as gravity pushes them down during the course of the day, Platte said. "Otherwise, I assume I wouldn't have made it."

Then, he met his first flight instructor.

"He was a white instructor," Platte said. "I was nervous and didn't know what to do, and he was also nervous and didn't know what to do."

Times Record News
PAGE: Internet
DATE: 17 Jan 06



AETC News Clips

Sheppard AFB, Texas



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But the instructor proved valuable, helping Platte make it through his training despite tense moments, such as when he couldn't complete a maneuver because he was afraid his seat belt wouldn't hold him in the plane. There was also the time when he had to land on a farm to get gas because he'd been daydreaming during a cross-country flight.

"I thought, 'Oh gee whiz, I need to get back to flying,' " he told the crowd, explaining that then he realized where he was. "I was in the restricted level, and I thought, 'They're going to shoot me!' "

But all of the misadventures were worth it when one of the proudest moments of his life arrived.

"When they told me I could actually be an instructor," he said.

He was the first black officer trained and commissioned in the pilot training program at Randolph Field Air Force Base, Texas. Platte trained nearly 1,000 cadets in aviation. He has been awarded the Good Conduct Medal and was promoted from first lieutenant to captain in 1950. The diversity now within the military has made him happy, Platte said.

"I can hardly believe it," he said.



AETC News Clips

Tyndall AFB, Fla.



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Talks focus on future of fuel depot

By S. Brady Calhoun News Herald Writer 747-5075 / bcalhoun@pcnh.com

LYNN HAVEN

U.S. Air Force officials say now is the time — for a little more talk.

The Lynn Haven City Commission and U.S. Rep. Allen Boyd, D-Monticello, will meet with Brig. Gen. Jack Egginton on Wednesday at 9:30 a.m. at Lynn Haven City Hall. The topic is the unused fuel depot in Lynn Haven.

Tyndall Air Force Base personnel and the Environmental Protection Agency are midway through an environmental cleanup of the depot.

Local politicians, business leaders and education officials have been salivating over the waterfront property for nearly a decade. Representatives from Florida State University-Panama City have been nudging anyone with political or military clout since 2001 because they want the spread to be turned into a coastal research center and an extension of the branch campus.

The Lynn Haven City Commission wants FSU-PC to have the land and went so far as to get the Bay County Commission and several local cities, including Parker, Springfield, Callaway and Cedar Grove, to agree on the deal.

But the Department of Defense has remained mum on what will become of the property and the silence isn't likely to change Wednesday, said Herman Bell, deputy chief of public affairs at Tyndall.

"This is kind of an update meeting," Bell said. "The cleanup effort is still going on. It has not been finished."

In June 2004, Lynn Haven commissioners, FSU-PC leaders and Air Force officers toured the site. Then the Air Force dropped a bomb: The environmental cleanup wouldn't be finished until 2012, Lt. Col. Kenny Weldon told the group.

Reached by phone on Monday, Bell said the environmental cleanup could be done much sooner than 2012, but it still would be at least 18 months before workers were finished.

"I don't think we're that far off," Weldon said. "We're getting closer. We're starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel."

The News Herald

PAGE: Emailed

DATE: 17 Jan 06



AETC News Clips

Tyndall AFB, Fla.



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The U.S. Navy built the fuel depot during World War II. The Air Force took custody of the parcel in the 1970s and abandoned it in 1993. Lynn Haven commissioners took an interest in the land in 1999.

A spokesman for Allen Boyd said Monday that Boyd's office didn't want to talk about the meeting until Wednesday.

The Department of Defense has never said what would be done with the waterfront parcel. Bell said the DoD would have to examine its own needs and the needs of the Air Force before it could consider giving away the property.

"We don't like sitting there, being landlords on property we can't use," Bell said.

Bell added that he doubted the Air Force would make a commitment as to who would get the depot on Wednesday.

No one should look for any "Earth-shaking announcements," Bell said. "We're not at that point."

The News Herald

PAGE: Emailed

DATE: 17 Jan 06



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Every Airman

Program teaches Air Force personnel basic combat skills

By Ed Offley News Herald Writer 747-5079 / eoffley@pcnh.com

TYNDALL AIR FORCE BASE

Rachel Sarcia reached out with gloved hands and grasped the M249 Squad Automatic Weapon, peering intently over the gunsight as her finger curled around its trigger. Kneeling next to the prone figure, Staff Sgt. Jason Hernandez called out, "Going hot!" The automatic rifle barked out a three-round burst that echoed and boomed across the firing range. Garbed in Kevlar helmet, flak jacket, woodland green fatigues and boots, the 23-year-old Massachusetts native was gearing up for combat Friday morning. To the untrained eye, Sarcia appeared identical to every U.S. Army infantryman who has received deployment orders to the nation's ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. She's not. Sarcia is a first-term enlistee at Tyndall Air Force Base. Assigned to the 325th Security Forces Squadron, whose nominal mission is air base defense — not stability operations, ground patrols or other tasks traditionally reserved for the Army and Marine Corps — the young senior airman is nevertheless preparing for direct combat. Three years after the United States went to war in Iraq, the Air Force and other military services are responding to a profound shift in battlefield realities, officials say. Support personnel who in the past would serve on secure, heavily defended bases in Europe or the Pacific now find themselves working and living in the thick of armed insurgents and terrorists. The concept of a battlefield "front" and a safer "rear area" simply does not exist in conflicts such as Iraq.

One Air Force security expert recently interviewed by the independent Air Force Times newspaper estimated 80 percent of deployed Air Force personnel were "incapable of unit self-defense" because they had never been trained for it.

In response, the Air Force last year began a basic combat training program for personnel preparing to serve overseas, said Tech. Sgt. Janell Jenkins, 30, the senior noncommissioned officer for training at the security forces squadron.

"We used to call it 'just-in-time' training," Jenkins said Friday. The service now calls the program "Expeditionary Combat Skills Training."

The unofficial term that has taken hold for this effort is, "Every Airman a Rifleman."

The local course involves two days of training, including classroom work, firing range qualifications and a limited field exercise in which personnel react to simulated hostile fire and are confronted by what Jenkins described as "shoot/no-shoot" scenarios.

The News Herald

PAGE: Emailed

DATE: 17 Jan 06



AETC News Clips

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And it's not limited to Tyndall's Security Forces personnel, who are trained from the outset in weapons and small-unit tactics.

"What we do is ensure that all military personnel from Tyndall arrive in the AOR (area of operations) trained to basic combat skills," Jenkins said. This can range from aircraft mechanics to computer technicians to public affairs specialists.

Local training at Tyndall and other bases is actually a stopgap measure for personnel who cannot participate in a lengthier training program that the U.S. Army initiated for other services last March, said Maj. Chris Dewitt, an Army trainer with the 91st Training Support Division at Fort Carson, Colo.

At Carson and several other Army bases, Air Force personnel go through a 21-day course that includes small-arms qualification, Humvee driver training, defenses against improvised explosive devices, or IEDs, convoy tactics, combat lifesaving and various "troop leading procedures," Dewitt said in a telephone interview. If time allows, the Army also provides familiarization training on heavier weapons such as the M240 and M2 machine guns, he said.

In addition, the Air Force last June established a 300-hour "Basic Combat Convoy Course" in San Antonio, for transportation, security forces, logistics and intelligence personnel. Officials say another 1,000 personnel have completed that training since last summer.

The Army-led program in 2005 prepared about 1,000 Air Force personnel for the volatile environments of Iraq and Afghanistan, Dewitt said. At Tyndall, Jenkins noted, more than 970 airmen preparing for overseas duty went through the two-day course.

Sarcia said she was glad to have the chance to become refamiliarized with the M249 rifle. "I haven't fired it since tech school three years ago," she said, wiping cordite residue that had darkened her cheek from the automatic rifle. "I'm good — ready to go," she added.

In actuality, Sarcia and other Tyndall Security Forces personnel preparing to deploy to Iraq are not done with training. They will also participate in a two-month program at the Air Mobility Warfare Center at Fort Dix., N.J., before shipping out, officials said.

The expanded programs have firm support from Air Force leadership.

"We all accept that we have a dangerous mission to do, but at the end of the day I want every one to come home safe," said Brig. Gen. Jack Egginton, 325th Fighter Wing commander at Tyndall.

U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Rachel Sarcia, who will be deployed to Iraq later this year, fires an M249 automatic rifle at a target 300 meters away at the small-arms firing range at Tyndall Air

The News Herald

PAGE: Emailed

DATE: 17 Jan 06



AETC News Clips

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Force Base on Friday. Responding to the reality that there is no “rear area” in regions with terrorists and insurgents, the U.S. Air Force is training all personnel in basic combat procedures.

U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Rachel Sarcia picks up empty shell casings after firing an M249 automatic rifle at Tyndall Air Force Base on Friday.

The News Herald

PAGE: Emailed

DATE: 17 Jan 06